1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

008

that characterized the Victorian rulers of India and still marks the framers of constitutions for the India of to-day. It could not be seen that there must have been some institutions or system in this apparently unordered Bastar to have kept her together and free from Mohammedan or Maratha interference for all those centuries. So from Glasfurd onwards Political Agents, Commissioners and Chief Commissioners sought to modernize the economics and the administration of this lovely and still lonely land. An alien police from 'civilized' India was soon followed along the gradually expanding lines of communication by Bania and Rohilla tradesmen, and by low-paid esurient subordinate officials 'lent' to the State, who regarded service in a native state only as a means to the rapid acquisition of wealth. Cultivation was to be expanded by the formation of new villages by alien immigrants; instead, the aliens were given long established Bhattra, Muria, Parja or Maria villages, nominally as lessees, over the heads of the traditional village headmen; and the lessees at once proceeded as fast as possible to get the best land into their own hands, to make the headmen's lives a burden by their repeated demands for forced labour and supplies, to ignore the use and wont of village life, especially the *sari-bori* or co-operation in supplies and labour for village bread-winning and village festivals, to introduce Hindu and Mussalman settlers, and to turn the natives of Bastar into bondservants little better than slaves by advancing them money, on terms which made repayment practically impossible, in return for their labour or that of their sons. Every immigrant trader even considered it his right to demand the labour of half a dozen 'Murias' to carry his wares for him. Consequent risings in 1876 and trouble in succeeding years led to the virtual supersession of the old Raja Bhairam Deo in 1886, and the State passed under full management on his death in 1891. From 1886 to 1891 and for the first few years of the long (1891-1908) minority of Raja Rudra Pratap Deo, a series of subordinate officials was lent as Diwans to the State, and a further evil arose in the growing array of minor State officials, few of whom were natives and none aboriginals of Bastar, abusing the ancient custom of *bisaha*, or the payment by villagers of a twentieth of their crops for the feeding of the Raja's servants, by interpreting it as a right to commandeer any aboriginal's produce at an arbitrarily fixed and often nominal price, and generally forgetting to pay even that. The newly-cleared roads soon seemed to run through wildernesses, for on villagers of roadside villages the burden of *begar*, or forced labour, and *bisaha* fell with especial severity. Being 184 miles from Raipur, the headquarters of the Commissioner and the Political Agent, Bastar was seldom visited, and the people were far too much

175
648

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

at the mercy of the incompetency or knavery of the local officials. The latter meanwhile were carrying on the prescribed policy of opening communications, introducing the criminal police and judicial system of British India, and exploiting the forests (again by forced labour). Though with the growth of trade there was much to be said for applying the Penal, Criminal Procedure and Civil Procedure Codes and the Evidence Act of British India to the open parts of the Jagdalpur tahsil and northern Bastar, they were far too advanced for most of the tribes, and remain so to this day. No notice was taken of the old system of caste or tribal or *pargana* panchayats presided over by the caste or *pargana* headman appointed by the Chief or the zamindar, which had for centuries administered rough and ready justice far more to the liking of the people than the troubles of a long investigation by a corrupt police, followed by a cumbersome magisterial enquiry and perhaps then the protracted agony of a sessions trial, to their minds unnecessary and unintelligible, with the farcical addition of assessors, chosen, so as to fulfil the requirements of a procedure code designed for a British India at least 1,000 years further advanced in civilization, from a few obsequious immigrants with no knowledge of aboriginal life or psychology. A similar attempt was made to improve on the old excise arrangements by which the local Kalar or Sundi was a village or *pargana* servant kept to distil liquor when needed for social or religious festivities, and remunerated in grain by the villagers every harvest; a system of auctioning outstills was introduced, the letter but not the spirit of arrangements in British India being copied, and the result was a number of contractors and sub-contractors all distilling and hawking liquor, and drunkenness on a scale previously unknown in Bastar and with few parallels in India. Of course trade was increasing, and more land was being cleared, *pari passu* with these growing abuses; but the moral effect of the changes was not good, and there can be few more striking examples of policy sound in motives but utterly wrong because of the divorce of administration from anthropology.

Sir Andrew Fraser, then Commissioner, in an able inspection note written after a long tour of the State in 1892, spotted much of the evil, particularly the State officials' utter ignorance of all but the villages adjacent to Jagdalpur and their headquarters, and their complete lack of touch with the people. He of course strongly advocated the policy of opening up the State, but saw that a just and active administration was necessary if the policy was to succeed. This was ultimately secured by the appointment in 1896 of Colonel (later Major-General) Fagan as Administrator. During his three years of rough and ready justice he toured the length and breadth

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

175
648

of the State, and he and his wife are still remembered with affection. The aboriginal, if he had to work on the new roads, yet saw that everyone else had to; but he no longer had to work for the alien trader and village-lessee, and he could get redress for oppression. Under Colonel Fagan and his successor, Mr. G. W. Gayer of the Indian Police, though roads were built and regular land revenue settlements effected on simplified Central Provinces lines, efficient administration kept the tribes satisfied; and for the first time medical relief and vaccination were organized in the State by Surgeon-Major Mitchell. But Mr. Gayer was succeeded by an Indian Superintendent, who held charge for the last few years of the minority and then continued till 1910 as Raja Rudra Pratap Deo's Diwan. He had served successfully as Diwan of Kalahandi State, and his intentions were admirable. Unfortunately he was unable to control his subordinates or to see that his excellent orders were enforced. The old abuses crept back into the swept and garnished State. He was responsible also for two unpopular innovations. The first was a policy of planting new primary schools all over the State, the masters being assisted by attendance peons who bullied the ryots into sending their children to school, while masters and peons levied forced labour and supplies freely. The second was the reservation of large areas as State forests, a measure very necessary as a check to the wholesale destruction of valuable timber by the aboriginals practising shifting cultivation, but bound by its very nature and its interference with long-cherished rights to arouse suspicion. It called, therefore, for great tact, and the people should have been carefully prepared for the measure, and protected from any avoidable hardship in its execution. Instead, it was carried out abruptly. Every village in the reserved areas was destroyed, though provision ought to have been made for forest villages as a source of forest labour, and if this had been done few of the villages need have been disturbed; the old village lands still often remain treeless in the forests, and in recent years it has been necessary to try and tempt settlers back to found much-needed forest villages. Oppression by State officials and by immigrant settlers, excessive levy of forced labour and supplies, unpopular new measures, and the apparent blindness of the Raja and his Diwan to popular grievances produced keen discontent, which was worked up by Lal Kalendra Singh, the first cousin and former Diwan of Raja Bhairam Deo, in the hope of securing the succession for himself. The Murias, Bhattras, and Parjas of Jagdalpur tahsil and some of the Bison-horn Marias and others in Dantewara tahsil and farther south broke into rebellion, in which the Murias of Antagarh and Kondagaon tahsils joined, only the zamindaris and

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

the Marias of the Abujhmar hills abstaining. The tribes converged on Jagdalpur, the Diwan who had been touring in the South fleeing into the Chanda district. A half battalion of regular Panjabi troops and large detachments of armed Central Provinces police soon suppressed and disarmed the rebels. A few ringleaders who had been guilty of cruel murders of isolated State officials were hanged, and several hundred men flogged, a punishment really more humane for such primitive men than imprisonment. Lal Kalendra Singh and a few of his associates were banished. The Raja was deprived of his powers, and an experienced Englishman, Mr. James May, appointed Diwan. The rebellion had been marked by keen hostility towards the immigrant exploiters, and a movement to keep Bastar for Bastaris. *Pari passu* with the punishment of the rebels, full enquiry was made into their undoubted grievances, and stern action taken against their oppressors. From 1910 till the Raja's death in 1921 the State was under virtual Government management; it has since then been under direct management, owing to the minority and the subsequent illness of the late Maharani.[1]

Save, therefore, for the short period 1908-10 the State has virtually been under Government management since 1886. Great progress has been made in developing communications. The Godavari navigation scheme referred to in the quotation above from Glasfurd's report was abandoned in 1871 after the works on the first barrier at Dummagudem in the present East Godavari district of Madras had been completed and much money had been spent on the works at the second barrier, where the river forms the boundary between Bastar and Hyderabad. This must be one of the very few great engineering works abandoned uncompleted by the British in India, defeated by the fever and sweltering heat of the valley, the difficulty of recruiting labour, lack of funds and the improbability of an adequate return for the great cost; and there are few more desolate sights than the vast ruins of the half-finished anicut, lock-gates and guard-walls that still resist the annual floods of this mighty river, and in the dry weather stand gaunt and futile in the baking wilderness of rocks and sands in which the united Godavari and Indrawati there lose themselves. With the transference of the Political Agency for Bastar from Sironcha to Raipur, all idea of the Godavari as the base-line for its communications was abandoned. Emphasis was placed on linking the north of the State with the main Nagpur-Calcutta railway line by roads from Raipur and Rajnandgaon to Jagdalpur, and the Vizagapatam Agency road from Salur

[1] The hereditary title of the Ruling Chief of Bastar was raised from Raja to Maharaja in 1932.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

lower castes and that of buffaloes only by Shudras. This flesh is of special sanctity as through it men who worship her get power. She is the special Goddess of the warring class—the Kshatriyas. Being the family goddess of the Ruler, she is recognized as the ruling goddess by all classes of Hindus and aboriginals of the State.

The Divine Right of Kings

The Maharaja is regarded as divine by all the Muria and Maria of the Jagdalpur Tahsil and by some of the northern Muria. Each ruler appends the word Deo to the end of his name, the other male members of his house calling themselves Singh, though to distinguish them from other Kshatriya the prefix Lal is added, as in Lal Kalindar Singh.

The *gadi* or throne is held sacred and no one but the actual ruler may sit upon it. Should anyone break the rule, he would die.

The ruler has special powers of intercession. 'His sacrifices, fasts, and oblations during the Dassera and Chaitrai festivals benefit not only himself but the members of the royal family and the people of the State. All the important deities of the State are brought to Jagdalpur during Dassera and worshipped on behalf of the ruler, his own worship being confined to the family goddess Danteshwari, Maoli and a few other gods. This worship keeps away disease from the people and cattle and results in good crops and universal happiness, as the deities remain pleased.'[1]

So strongly do the aboriginals believe this, that they greatly resent the Maharaja leaving the State even for a short time. His absence means a withdrawal of divine protection from cattle, crops and people.

Kadrengal

Kadrengal is the consort of Tallur Muttai, as Bangaram is the consort of Danteshwari. A story which I quote elsewhere[2] links him with the forest and the chase, and he is generally worshipped by the Muria before they set out on a ceremonial hunt. In some villages, however, Pati Deo takes his place.

His name occurs from time to time, generally in association with Tallur Muttai, in the songs and legends. In the oldest mythology he plays the part which more modern people ascribe to Mahadeo.

With Tallur Muttai and Lingo, he lives in the ghotul and protects the boys and girls. Along with other deities he is worshipped and remembered at festivals and on most of the major occasions of Muria life.

Dulha Deo

Jahe chulha taha Dulha.—Where there is a hearth, there is Dulha Deo.

Dulha Deo is the marriage god and is supposed to preside not only over the wedding bet over the marriage bed, its happiness and its fertility.

Dulha Deo is not an original Muria god. He is an immigrant from the Central Provinces, where he receives very much more attention than in Bastar. In Bastar he has a certain nuisance value as causing trouble during marriages, a rather expensive addition to the pantheon who must be placated for fear that he will make himself objectionable. His ill temper can easily be explained

[1] Private communication from Rai Sahib Hiranjan Singh.
[2] See page 41.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

TABLE FOUR

Sex-ratio in 100 cases, involving 117 convictions

Male	112
Female	5

The Bison-horn Maria do not live in complete isolation. They are in contact with other people, what are often called civilized people. But this contact is mainly a business and commercial contact; it is not an emotional one. Normally there are few chances in any relationship between a Maria and a Hindu or Mussalman for the development of those intense and passionate feelings that may lead to murder. This will probably account for the very small number of people murdered who belonged to other communities.

TABLE FIVE

Illustrating caste of victims in 107 cases

Fellow-Maria	99
Other castes	8

Two of these were killed for their possessions in straightforward robbery—very unusual incidents. One of the victims was a Kalar who was going to report a cattle-theft. One was a boy caught in a madman's fury. But it might have been anyone. Another was a Rawat. But the Rawat, who are the herdsmen of the Maria, live so closely with them as to count almost as members of the tribe. Once during a gambling quarrel a Mahara beat a Maria, a serious matter involving the Maria's excommunication. In one case a Mahara woman was chosen as a human sacrifice. In only one case was a member of another caste involved with a Maria woman. A Dhobi tried to seduce a Maria girl, but it was the girl who was murdered.

I have heard, however, of another case (not among the 100) where the wife of a Maria, one Poyami Masa, at Kodenar had an intrigue with a Kalar liquor-vendor. One night very late the woman—according to previous arrangement—got up and

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

An ingenious attempt to hoodwink the police occurred at Jhoriabadhan in 1923. After the mysterious disappearance of a little boy aged two-and-a-half years the police came to investigate, and the villagers took the constable to the threshing-floor whence the child had disappeared, and there showed him a boy about six years old. They told him that this was the missing boy and that he had been found wandering in the fields. Even the child's own mother declared that this was the lost boy, and since all the members of the family as well as the villagers supported her, the police went away. There is no doubt, however, that a child did disappear and it is probable that he was offered as a human sacrifice.

In one case, but only one, a prosecution witness was so troubled by his family that he committed suicide. On the whole, however, the Maria appear to co-operate with the police very well. In 88 cases out of 100, they assisted in some way or other. Sometimes they reported the matter at the police station. Sometimes they themselves arrested the murderer and kept him in custody until the police arrived. They co-operated by assisting at the inquest which is held in a village when the police arrive to investigate a suspicious death. In one case the villagers took an active and dangerous part in pursuing a convict who had escaped from jail with the result that one of their number was killed.

TABLE TWENTY-ONE

Illustrating the kind of assistance given to police in 100 cases

Information withheld from police	...	...	12
Homicide reported by villagers	...	...	79
Accused arrested by villagers	...	...	25
Accused gives himself up to police	...	...	9

This was the exciting pursuit of Markami Mundra in 1934. Mundra was convicted in 1933 and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for an act of violence. On 3 May 1934, he escaped from jail with another convict and a proclamation was issued for their arrest. A Sub-Inspector of Police went at once to Gudra, Mundra's own village, and told the people that a reward of fifty rupees had been offered for his

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

626 capture, and some constables went from village to village
648 looking for him. Very daringly Mundra in his prisoner's clothes went to his house in Gudra, and stayed there till his mother came home from a bazaar. Thence he went to a Kalar's house near Nayanar. The police heard that he was somewhere about, and without knowing that Mundra was hiding there, went to the house to get fire to light their cigarettes. Mundra seeing them and supposing that he was discovered rushed out with a knife in his hand, and tried to stab one of the constables. But they caught him and tied him up with the help of the villagers. They took him to the Kuakonda police station, which they reached at dawn. Thence they went on to Dantewara, which they reached late at night and put up in the Kotwar's house. They tied Mundra's feet to the leg of the cot on which one of the constables was sleeping, and his handcuffed hand to a pillar. But while they were all asleep, Mundra managed to escape again. This time he went to his maternal uncle and got his handcuffs broken. Then dressed in a small loin-cloth and carrying a bow and arrow, he went to his house and took away his wife Kase.

Meanwhile the police went back to Gudra and with the help of the villagers searched the surrounding forest. For eight days the search went on, the Maria taking a leading part in it. At last they got information that Mundra had been seen in someone's field. They again beat the forest and at last found Mundra and his wife. Mundra threatened them with his arrows and managed to escape. But the villagers caught his wife and brought her home. Another week passed with Mundra lurking in the jungle, and one day when Kase went to work in the fields, he took her away again. The Maria, led by Markami Bhima, their headman, again searched for him, but without success, until at last they found him and his wife on the Kopli Hill. Mundra turned upon his pursuers and shot at one of them, his arrow hitting the ground a little in front of him. Once again the search-party succeeded in capturing the unfortunate Kase, and she was beaten and tied up inside her house with a large party of Maria guarding her.

During the night the woman wept loudly, and attracted by her cries Mundra came and stood before the house and said

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

that he would kill the men who were pursuing him and troubling her. He accused his fellow-Maria of doing more than the police for his arrest. Then he struck a beam of the house with his axe in token of revenge and went away. After some days—it was now over two months since he escaped from Dantewara—Mundra again went to look for his wife, but was unable to find her. Markami Bhima the headman, who had been threatened with death by Mundra, had been taking many precautions. But Mundra somehow managed to get into his house at night and killed him by shooting him at close range with an arrow. A week later Mundra went into the Madras Presidency. His hiding-place was betrayed by a woman who met some Maria from the original village who were still searching for him, and the police managed to arrest him on 2 February 1935.

The most remarkable thing about this case was the very large part taken by the Maria in assisting the police. They were no doubt influenced by the reward of fifty rupees that was offered, but even so their help was remarkable and Mundra greatly resented it.

III

Why do the villagers conceal murders from the police? We should not too hastily attribute this to a merely savage absence of the civic instinct. There are many other reasons. First and foremost they still consider that they should settle everything themselves. They believe that it is only in a tribal Court that the real facts can be known. We have seen that they are generally unwilling to testify against a powerful priest or magician who might revenge himself on them. They are equally unwilling to assist the police where they believe a murder has been justified.

Then they fear the annoyance and expense of having police subordinates quartered on them and the expense and waste of time of having to go to a distant Court, especially at the more busy periods of the agricultural year. Again the real reason for a crime is often something which the Maria dislike revealing in Court and which they despair of making outsiders understand. Another powerful factor is the supernatural danger—and the expense of avoiding it—of a post-

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

mortem examination, and of allowing the corpse to be buried outside the proper territory of its clan.

Memories of past oppression die slowly and Grigson has a remarkable passage on the conflict between State and people in former times. He points out how in the old days in Bastar (as in many parts of India at the present time) everything conspired to limit the authority and lower the prestige of the tribal elders. He describes the extreme inconvenience to the villagers of a police investigation.

> A badly trained police, often singularly lacking in common sense, would descend on a village and waste days in pointless investigation of petty cases, expecting not only to be fed on rice, mutton and poultry by the villagers during their stay, but also to be provided with stores of grain under the old bisaha system to take away with them at the end of the investigation. Villagers would be compelled to carry the supplies thus forcibly taken from them to the police station, perhaps two or three days' march distant, and would rarely be given even the nominal payment prescribed under the old bisaha rules. Then would follow a protracted trial at the still more distant tahsil headquarters, ten witnesses being summoned where three or four would have been ample; and probably all these witnesses at the end of the trial would have to accompany the police party back to the police station to carry their impediments, and might be kept even longer as 'athpaharia begar' labourers to clean the police office and lines and do domestic work for the constables.

Even today when the Bastar police force has been trained in traditions that are in many respects admirable, it is impossible to keep a check on the conduct of all subordinates, and their very presence in a village is disturbing to the aboriginals. Grigson continues,

> It is not surprising that, as the result of these methods of dealing with the aboriginals, their panchayats tended to co-operate as little as possible with the State; their object became to conceal crime from the police and in general to comply with State requirements only so far as was necessary in order to avoid trouble, and, above all, visits of subordinate State officials to their villages. The records of murder and other trials show many cases of the village elders meeting and deciding to hush up a crime, especially if it had occurred at harvest or any other busy agricultural season, rather than have the whole life of the village community disorganized by police

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

investigation, committal proceedings and Sessions trial. Such crimes may have come to light later through the panchayat reporting them at their own convenience, or through the widow or other relative of a murdered man being dissatisfied with the compensation which the murderer had been ordered to give, while in some Parganas informers arose who subsequently used their supposed prestige with the police to become petty local tyrants. Conversely on occasions panchayats, disgusted with the failure of the police to investigate thefts or with the acquittal of guilty persons by the Tahsildars, took the law into their own hands and had the thieves killed.[1]

I make no apology for quoting Grigson at length on this subject, for it was largely due to his efforts that a new tradition was established in Bastar, and that the Maria began, however slowly and imperfectly, to co-operate with the administration. The new attitude is indeed a remarkable tribute to the sympathy and intelligence of the Bastar police and the understanding and courtesy of the committing Magistrates and Sessions Judges. Even so I doubt whether the Maria will ever be able to overcome the tribal and religious objections to revealing their inmost thoughts in the public Court.

762 This fear of the outside world is revealed in a number of examples where Maria have committed suicide rather than be involved in police enquiries and legal proceedings.

The aboriginal is not alone in finding litigation and contact with officialdom trying to the nerves. Hunga of Kothiagura was involved in a cattle-theft case and believed himself badly treated by the constable investigating it. He prepared a petition to the Superintendent of Police and wrapping it carefully in a parsa leaf set out to Jagdalpur to present it. But on the way, his fears, his grievance, his sense of lost prestige overwhelmed him, and he hanged himself from a parsa tree by the roadside.[2]

Marvi Mundra of Cholnar had some of his cattle stolen and

[1] Grigson, op. cit., pp. 284 ff.

[2] The case of Saradu, a young Maria landlord of Bermaket, in 1933, belongs to the bad old days before the taking of free supplies and labour had been prohibited. An Excise Sub-Inspector came to the village to enquire into a case of illicit distillation. He does not seem to have received all the supplies he wanted, and so he threatened the landlord, who came of a leading Muria family, with prosecution on some false charge. Saradu hanged himself rather than face the indignity and disgrace.